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GENERAL NOTES

The Centenary of the Royal Astronomical Society.—The one hundredth annual meeting of the Royal Astronomical Society of London, which was held on February 13, 1920, is an event worthy of more than passing notice. “A fitting celebration of this event,” said Professor Alfred Fowler in his presidential address, “has been rendered impossible for the present by circumstances arising out of the war, but the question has become the subject of consideration by the Council, and their proposals will be announced in due course.”

In his address¹ Professor Fowler gives an interesting account of the founding of the Society and of its early history. It appears that the honor of being the founder belongs to the Rev. Dr. William Pearson, an excellent observer and the author of *An Introduction to Practical Astronomy*, which is still full of interest to the student of astronomy. But the claims to this honor of Francis Bailey, whose name is now best known in connection with the phenomenon of “Bailey’s Beads,” are only second to those of Dr. Pearson, and Bailey was even more active in organizing the work of the Society. In the list of the fourteen signers of the original agreement drawn up at the meeting held on January 12, 1820, to consider the question of establishing such a society, we find the names of Stephen Groombridge, J. F. W. Herschel and James South; and Sir William Herschel, then eighty-two years of age, became in 1821 the first President of the Society.² We refer our readers to Professor Fowler’s very interesting address for further details of the early history of the oldest, and, in many respects, the most important astronomical society in the world.

In its first century the Society has exercised a powerful influence upon the development of astronomy. Its two series of publications, the *Memoirs* and the *Monthly Notices*, are indispensable to the astronomer; its associates and medalists have been chosen so judiciously that such recognition is a stimulus as well as a high honor. Further, the discussions at the regular meetings, as printed in the *Observatory*, are followed with the keenest interest by astronomers everywhere. It is a matter for congratulation that the Society

¹Printed in the February, 1920, number of the *Monthly Notices*, copies of which have just reached Mt. Hamilton.

²There was no president for the first year.

enters upon the second century of its history with prospects of even greater usefulness. It has a total membership of 767 (including fifty Associates in foreign countries), a permanent and beautiful home in Burlington House, a splendid library and ample financial resources.

The Henry Draper Catalogue.—Volume 94 of the *Annals of the Harvard College Observatory* contains the fourth instalment of the great *Henry Draper Catalogue*, including the stars in 9, 10 and 11 hours of right ascension. The four volumes of the catalog which have now been issued make available to astronomers the spectral class of 104,953 stars in the half of the sky from 0.0 to 12.0 hours right ascension.

Photographs of representative stellar spectra and portraits of Dr. and Mrs. Henry Draper were presented as the frontispieces of the first three volumes. It is fitting, as Professor Bailey says, that the frontispiece of the present volume should be the portrait of the late E. C. Pickering, under whose direction the work was undertaken and brought practically to completion, but who lived to see only the first three volumes in print.

Publications of the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory.—In Volume I, No. 1, of the *Publications of the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory*, Victoria, B. C., which has just been issued, the Director, Dr. J. S. Plaskett, gives a detailed account of the great 72-inch reflector and of the observatory building.¹

Observing work with the great telescope began on May 7, 1918, and has since been carried on with enthusiasm and marked success by the director and his limited staff. The performance of the instrument under actual working conditions has surpassed even the sanguine expectations of Dr. Plaskett, and he is led to conclude that "this instrument in optical and mechanical perfection, in convenience and speed of operating is, in my opinion, unequalled in the world."

Seven additional parts of this volume, giving some of the results of the first year's work, are in press and are soon to be issued.

¹For an excellent brief account see Dr. Plaskett's article in the October, 1918, number of these PUBLICATIONS.